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**TESTIMONY RE: RAISED BILL 6674, AN ACT CONCERNING WORKFORCE
DEVELOPMENT AND IMPROVED ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE SERVICES.**

Public Health Committee

March 16, 2009

Good morning Senator Harris, Representative Ritter and members of the Public Health Committee. Thank-you for the opportunity to provide testimony on behalf of the Connecticut Nurses' Association (CNA), the professional organization for registered nurses in Connecticut. I am Carole Bergeron, RN, PhD, Executive Director of CNA. Mary Jane Williams, RN, PhD, the chair of our Government Relations Committee and chair of the Department of Nursing at the University of Hartford, is currently overseeing an exchange program in London and could not be here today. I am here to speak in support of Raised Bill 6674, An Act Concerning Workforce Development and Improved Access to Health Care Services.

Raised Bill 6674, Section 1, calls for development of an "initiative to address the state's health care workforce shortage. Such initiative shall seek to increase the number of health care workers in the state through the offering of expanded and enhanced educational programs at public institutions of higher education." This coordinated state wide effort is essential as Connecticut has severe shortages in most of the health care professions. An OLR Research Report *Background: Recruiting and Retaining a Primary Healthcare Workforce* (<http://www.cga.ct.gov/2008/rpt/2008-R-0679.htm>) provides data on the primary care providers and other data is available through the Allied Health Workforce Policy Board. The Board's 2007 report outlines the challenges and recommendations regarding the health care workforce shortages. It is available at: <http://www.cwealf.org/resources/alliedhealthwpb%20report%2007.pdf>

The Connecticut Allied Health Workforce Policy Board has and should continue to be the driving force in assessing the workforce needs of the state. The Board should be charged with designing and recommending ongoing strategies to address the growing shortages productively in collaboration with the Office of Workforce Competitiveness (OWC). OWC should become the repository for state workforce data. It should also be charged with data analysis and data distribution as appropriate, as Connecticut begins to proactively address the health care workforce shortages.

Raised Bill 6674 also begins to address the issue of primary care workforce providers, Advanced Practice Registered Nurses (APRN), which is a major legislative goal for CNA. As we make critical decisions this year about the ability of patients to have access to quality, cost effective health care in Connecticut, we must consider how and who will care for the thousands of uninsured or underinsured patients. The expansion of services will call for well-qualified, affordable providers.

The literature is clear that for over 40 years Advanced Practice Nurses have been safe, cost effective providers of care who have positive outcomes and receive high marks for patient satisfaction. Amending the current statute by removing the mandated written collaborative agreement will remove a barrier to accessing this important group of primary providers.

This change in the statute will:

- ◆ Eliminate the mandated written collaborative agreement with a physician but will maintain the current scope of practice of the APRN. This elimination will not change the APRN scope and standards of professional practice as defined by the accrediting body and by statute.
- ◆ It will allow the safe and effective care that is provided by advanced practice registered nurses to continue to be available in Connecticut.
- ◆ The patient care and outcome of care will not be changed.
- ◆ It will enhance continued collaboration with physicians and other health care providers in the state as the APRN makes health care decisions.

- ♦ It will allow the APRN to practice with a model that is based on health promotion, disease prevention, health education and counseling. These are necessary requisites for instituting “comprehensive disease management programs, aimed at reducing costs and improving quality of life for people with asthma, diabetes, hypertension and other chronic diseases” which should be cornerstones of any health plans.

It will increase Connecticut’s “efforts to provide care for the uninsured and under insured in Connecticut. This bill speaks to patients not only having access to but also being able to have a sustained relationship with an advanced practice registered nurse (APRN).

Advanced Practice Registered Nurses provide quality, cost effective care. It is time we recognized their value in the provision of primary care in the Connecticut and put a stop to the limitation of their practice. Connecticut will not be capable of implementing the current health care proposals unless they address the need for providers up front and allow APRN’s to work to the full scope of their education.

We urge the committee’s support of this bill and will be available for questions.

Connecticut Nurses’ Association is a member of the Connecticut Coalition of Advanced Practice Nurses

American College of Nurse-Midwives (ACNM), Region I, Chapter 2
Connecticut Advanced Practice Registered Nurse Society (CT APRNS)
Connecticut Association of Nurse Anesthetists (CANA)
Connecticut Nurses’ Association (CNA)
Connecticut Society of Nurse Psychotherapists (CSNP)
National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners (NAPNAP), Connecticut Chapter
The Northwest Nurse Practitioner Group

NOTE: Dr. Mary Jane Williams was unable to present today as she is on a University exchange in London with graduate students.